REMARKS

INTRODUCTION

In accordance with the foregoing, claims 1-27 have been amended. No new matter is being presented, and approval and entry are respectfully requested.

Claims 1-27 are pending and under consideration.

CLAIM OBJECTION

In the Office Action, at pages 2, item 2, claims 7, 14, 21, and 22 were objected to under 35 C.F.R. § 1.75(1) as failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter of the invention. The changes suggested by the Examiner have been made. Withdrawal of the objection is respectfully requested.

PRIOR ART

Swenson discusses a system for modeling a work process (Abstract). A plan is modeled and implemented with a work process model. A work process model is made of interrelated tasks assigned to users. A work process model is managed by a server, which the users access with viewers. The viewers communicate with the work process model server through a TCL message bus. Work process models are displayed as a set of graphic symbols, or as a list of tasks assigned to the viewing user ("a list of tasks that need to be done by that user", col. 2, lines 45-48). Users update the work process model by issuing to the system "action commands", which may include comments associated with the action, and with subject matter addressed to the user assigned to the task or to another user (col. 2, lines 56-60). Execution instructions such as sending e-mail can be triggered by starting or ending tasks (col. 3, line 1).

The present invention relates to a messaging system for composing interpersonal messages to receivers. Swenson does not discuss or suggest this kind of messaging. Swenson discusses two forms of "messaging". One is the program messaging which implements Interprocess Communications (IPC) across the message bus between viewers and the plan server. The "Free On-Line Dictionary of Computing" (foldoc.doc.ic.ac.uk) defines IPC as "Exchange of data between one process and another, either within the same computer or over a network." For IPC, Swenson uses TCL, and supports the passing of TCL code as messages between TCL applications running on different machines across a network (see col.

10, lines 31-38).

The other form of "messaging" in Swenson is the use of a plan or work process model to collect information relating to the execution of a plan. However, as stated by Swenson, "viewer contexts on one computer workstation generally do not direct communications to viewer modules or viewer contexts on other computer workstations ... no direct communication between these users or their respective workstations occurs" (col. 11, lines 19-30). With Swenson, users simply direct information to the work process model, not to other users. Thus the work process model in Swenson does not relate to interpersonal messages.

Neither of the two forms of "messaging" in Swenson corresponds to the interpersonal messages recited in the claims of the present invention. Swenson's messaging does not allow a user to compose interpersonal messages, address them to receivers, and send them to receivers, who may respectively respond to the message. In sum, Swenson, as characterized by the Examiner at item 33 of the Office Action, is a "workflow system". Swenson is not an interpersonal message system.

REJECTIONS UNDER 35 USC § 102

In the Office Action, at pages 2-8, claims 1-12 and 18-27 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102 as anticipated by Swenson. This rejection is traversed and reconsideration is requested.

Claim 1, as amended, recites a "message management unit" enabling a user at each terminal to "compose interpersonal messages and to view and respond to received interpersonal messages respectively". The Examiner alleged that col. 11, lines 19-24 of Swenson correspond to the composing and viewing of interpersonal messages recited in claims 1. This portion of Swenson states that viewers "send and receive **messages** to or from the computer workstation running the server module and/or colloquy [work process model] contexts." In Swenson, users send updates to a work process model by clicking on a "course of action" (or "expectation"), shown by the small circles 52, 54, 56, 58, etc. of Fig. 2. Then, "When an expectation (small circle) is selected, an **event message** (event), signifying the selection of the expectation of the selection is sent to another stage ..." (col. 6, lines 17-22), where the message is a small TCL script effectuating an IPC. In other words, TCL messages in Swenson are object or event messages for IPC, in the form of segments of TCL scripting code. In Swenson, when a user takes an action directed to a task in a work process model, the user's viewer sends a message to the server that is executing the work process model context, and the server then broadcasts

the message over the bus.

In sum, the term "message" in Swenson refers to low-level IPC-type event communications between processes. However, the term "message" in the computing arts can refer to many different types of messages. For example, a "message" can be a signal sent between objects in an objected-oriented system. A "message" can be a notification of events between programs. A "message" can be part of a communication protocol, as in "Internet Control Message Protocol" (ICMP). A "message" can also be a form of electronic interpersonal communication, as for example an interpersonal e-mail message or an instant-messaging message. The "whatis?com's" Encyclopedia of Technology Terms defines one meaning of message as "1) Using e-mail, a message is an individual piece of mail". The term "message", by itself, would be a term subject to different meanings. However, it is clear from the entire specification of the present invention that "interpersonal message" in the present claims refers to a meaning akin to the last definition.

This distinction between the present invention and Swenson is further apparent because Swenson does not discuss *composing* interpersonal messages, as recited in claim 1. The only composing in Swenson, which was not cited by the Examiner, is the writing of comments that are associated with a task. The comments are not addressed to a particular recipient, but rather are associated with a given task. Furthermore, in Swenson the TCL messages are exchanged between the viewers and the server; they are not "composed", but rather are generated automatically by a user's viewer to notify the server that the user has taken an action related to a task. Withdrawal of the rejection of claim 1 is further respectfully requested.

Although claim 1 has been amended to recite "interpersonal message", it is respectfully submitted that this clarifies the previous meaning implicitly in the claims as originally worded. Therefore, the addition of "interpersonal" is not a narrowing amendment but rather makes explicit what was previously implicit in the claims (see Federal Circuit case Interactive Pictures v Infinite Pictures, No. 011029 - 12/20/2001).

Because Swenson fails to disclose an interpersonal message preparation unit, it cannot teach or suggest a receiver state list; there are no interpersonal composed messages in Swenson, so there are no receivers. The Examiner referred to the TaskStatus message of Swenson, which is "the important data regarding each task in the current colloquy [work process model] that has a particular status." In this part of the rejection, the Examiner is apparently equating a "message" in the present claims with a "task" in Swenson. However, a task is not a

message. A task is not composed and sent to a receiver, but rather is added to a work process model and assigned to a user. As such, the "state list", or history of activity of a task is not a "receiver state list" as recited in claim 1. Withdrawal of the rejection of claim 1 is further respectfully requested.

Claim 3 recites that it enables "the content of the interpersonal message and the receiver state list corresponding to the interpersonal message to be displayed on a terminal screen in an associated manner". The Examiner cited col. 17, lines 4-9 of Swenson. The only list in this portion of Swenson is the action history list. The action history list does not correspond to a receiver state list, because the receiver state list is a list of "states of a plurality of receivers of an interpersonal message"; it is a list associated with an interpersonal *message*. However, the action history in Swenson is a list of states of a task in a work process model, which is not an interpersonal message. The ostensible "message" in item 206 in Fig. 9 of Swenson is nothing more than a help comment associated with the current action selected from the action menu (col. 17, lines 1-3). Withdrawal of the rejection of claim 3 is respectfully requested.

Claim 18 recites "a plurality of receivers whom an interpersonal message is multi-addressed to". The Examiner rejected claim 18, stating that it does "not teach or define above the information in the corresponding apparatus claims, they are rejected under the same basis". None of the apparatus claims recite "a plurality of receivers whom an interpersonal message is multi-addressed to". This feature again makes clear that the claims of the present invention are addressed to interpersonal type messaging. The "messages" from a user in Swenson are sent to the server, which then acts on the message and then sends another message to update viewers with the action. Nowhere does Swenson discuss interpersonal messages *addressed to* receivers. Withdrawal of the rejection of claim 18 is respectfully requested.

The other independent claims have also been amended to clarify that they relate to "interpersonal" messages. Withdrawal of their rejection is respectfully requested.

REJECTIONS UNDER 35 USC § 103

In the Office Action, at pages 8-10, claims 13-17 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as obvious. Claim 15 was rejected as obvious over Swenson. Claims 13, 14, 16, and 17 were rejected as obvious over Swenson in view of Williams. These rejections are traversed and reconsideration is requested.

In rejecting claim 15, the Examiner stated "Official notice is hereby taken of the fact that

edit menus *commonly include* a find option that allows for keyword searching". Claim 15 recites features that together *automatically* count comments to messages that contain keywords. Claim 15 has been amended to clarify that the keyword searching is done automatically, unlike the menu-driven manual keyword search discussed by the Examiner. Swenson does not discuss or suggest features capable of accomplishing this advantage. Withdrawal of the rejection of claim 15 is respectfully requested.

Claim 14 recites "obtaining a completion ratio from completion information indicating that the receivers of the interpersonal message have viewed the message, or that business activities related to a content of the message is completed". Williams was cited as allegedly discussing this feature, however, Williams only discusses sending acknowledgments based on a "mail function", such as "file (store), print, delete, etc.". This differs from completion information indicating that activity related to the content of the message has been completed or viewed. Swenson was not cited for, and does not add or suggest this feature. Withdrawal of the rejection of claim 14 is respectfully requested. Other independent claims (20, 24, 26) have been similarly amended to clarify that the completion is related to the content of the message.

The other independent claims are distinguishable over the prior art based on the arguments above relating to both Swenson and Williams. Withdrawal of their rejection is respectfully requested.

DEPENDENT CLAIMS

The dependent claims are deemed patentable due at least to their dependence from allowable independent claims. These claims are also patentable due to their recitation of independently distinguishing features. For example, claim 4 recites "open information indicating open states of the interpersonal message of the plurality of receivers". This feature is not taught or suggested by the prior art. Withdrawal of the rejection of the dependent claims is respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

In accordance with the foregoing, claims 1-27 have been amended. Claims 1-27 are pending and under consideration.

There being no further outstanding objections or rejections, it is submitted that the application is in condition for allowance. An early action to that effect is courteously solicited.

Finally, if there are any formal matters remaining after this response, the Examiner is

requested to telephone the undersigned to attend to these matters.

If there are any additional fees associated with filing of this Amendment, please charge the same to our Deposit Account No. 19-3935.

Respectfully submitted,

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VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please AMEND and ADD to the claims as follows:

(Claims 1-27 are amended.)

1. (TWICE AMENDED) A message processing apparatus connected to a plurality of terminals via a network, comprising:

a message management unit enabling a user at each of said plurality of terminals to compose interpersonal messages and to view and respond to received interpersonal messages respectively; and

a preparation unit preparing a receiver state list indicating states of a plurality of receivers of [a] an interpersonal message that is managed by said message management unit.

2. (TWICE AMENDED) The message processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the receiver state list includes completion information indicating whether the receivers have viewed the interpersonal message or whether the receivers have completed business activities related to a content of the message.

3. (TWICE AMENDED) The message processing apparatus according to claim 2, wherein the message management unit enables the content of the interpersonal message and the receiver state list corresponding to the message to be displayed on a terminal screen in an associated manner.

4. (TWICE AMENDED) The message processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the receiver state list includes:

open information indicating open states of the interpersonal message of the plurality of receivers; and

completion information indicating whether the receivers have viewed the interpersonal message or whether the receivers have completed business activities related to a content of the interpersonal message.

5. (TWICE AMENDED) The message processing apparatus according to claim 1, comprising:

a storage unit storing the content of the interpersonal message, receivers' names and completion information indicating whether the receivers have viewed the content of the interpersonal message or whether the receivers have completed business activities related to a content the interpersonal message, in an associated manner, wherein

the preparation unit prepares the receiver state list based on the receivers' names and the completion information.

6. (TWICE AMENDED) The message processing apparatus according to claim 5, comprising:

an amendment unit amending the contents of a transmitted interpersonal message stored in the storage unit; and

a recovery unit recovering all the receivers' open information indicating an open state to a not-opened state when the interpersonal message is amended by the amending unit.

7. (TWICE AMENDED) The message processing apparatus according to claim 6, wherein:

the storage unit stores a plurality of comments prepared by the receivers in response to the interpersonal message; and

the recovery unit causes the comments stored in the storage unit to be stored without modification, when the transmitted message is amended by the amendment unit.

8. (TWICE AMENDED) The message processing apparatus according to claim 5, wherein:

the storage unit stores a message type of the interpersonal message, and

the preparation unit prepares the receiver state list according to the message type, the receivers' names and the completion information.

9. (TWICE AMENDED) The message processing apparatus according to claim 8, comprising:

a setting unit displaying comment alternatives of comment patterns which correspond to the message type of the received interpersonal message, in a comment section of the received

interpersonal message, and setting a comment pattern which corresponds to a comment alternative selected by the receiver as the receiver's comment to the received interpersonal message, wherein

the storage unit includes a comment pattern storage portion for storing, corresponding to the message type, the comment patterns and the comment alternatives which correspond respectively to the comment patterns.

10. (TWICE AMENDED) The message processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the message management unit enables a sender and all receivers of the interpersonal message to view the content of the interpersonal message and the receiver state list on screens of the terminals.

11. (TWICE AMENDED) The message processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the message management unit provides a comment section for inputting a comment to the received interpersonal message and causes the comment inputted to the comment section to be displayed as the comment of a corresponding receiver, in the receiver state list.

12. (TWICE AMENDED) The message processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the message management unit causes a delay state for a response time limit that is set in the interpersonal message to be displayed as delay information in a received message list.

13. (TWICE AMENDED) The message processing apparatus according to claim 1, comprising:

an open ratio obtaining unit obtaining an open ratio of the interpersonal message from open information indicating an open state of the receiver of the interpersonal message, and

a display unit displaying the open ratio of the interpersonal message in a message list.

14. (TWICE AMENDED) The message processing apparatus according to claim 1, comprising:

a completion ratio obtaining unit obtaining a completion ratio from completion information indicating that the receivers of the interpersonal message have viewed the interpersonal message, or that business activities related to [the massage] a content of the interpersonal message is completed; and

a display unit displaying the completion ratio which is obtained from the completion ratio obtaining unit in a message list.

15. (TWICE AMENDED) The message processing apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising:

a detection unit automatically detecting designated keywords from [receivers'] comments submitted by a receiver of the interpersonal message in response to the interpersonal message; and

a counter unit counting a number of comments which include the keywords detected by the detection unit, wherein

the message management unit causes the number of comments including the designated keywords to be displayed on a terminal.

16. (TWICE AMENDED) A message processing apparatus for processing a plurality of interpersonal messages transmitted from a plurality of terminals, the message processing apparatus comprising:

a preparation unit preparing a message list for displaying a formatted type interpersonal message related to business activities and a non-formatted type interpersonal message not related to business activities, together with a message type; and

a message management unit managing information in the message list.

17. (TWICE AMENDED) A message management method for managing a plurality of interpersonal messages transmitted from a plurality of terminals, comprising:

displaying a formatted type interpersonal message related to business activities and a non-formatted type interpersonal message not related to the business activities, together with a message type.

18. (TWICE AMENDED) A message management method for use by a server apparatus connected via a network to a plurality of terminals, comprising:

enabling a user to compose, view and respond to interpersonal messages from one of the terminals; and

preparing a receiver state list indicating respective states of a plurality of receivers whom [a] an interpersonal message is multi-addressed to.

19. (TWICE AMENDED) The message management method according to claim 18, comprising displaying the receiver state list in a manner associated with the interpersonal message.

20. (TWICE AMENDED) The message management method according to claim 18, comprising:

displaying the receiver state list in a manner associated with the interpersonal message,

wherein, the receiver state list includes receivers' names and completion information indicating whether receivers of the interpersonal message have viewed the interpersonal message or whether the receivers of the interpersonal message have completed business activities related to a content of the interpersonal message.

21. (TWICE AMENDED) A message management method for use by a server apparatus connected via a network to a [[managing messages transmitted from]] plurality of terminals, comprising:

enabling a user to compose, view and respond to interpersonal messages from one of the terminals;

preparing a receiver state list indicating respective states of a plurality of receivers whom [a] an interpersonal message is multi-addressed to; and

managing information in the receiver state list.

22. (TWICE AMENDED) The message management method according to claim 21, wherein the receiver state list includes receivers' names and completion information indicating whether receivers of the interpersonal message have viewed [[that receiver confirms]] the interpersonal message or whether the receivers of [themes sage] the interpersonal message have completed business activities related to a content of the interpersonal message.

23. (TWICE AMENDED) A computer readable storage medium storing a program, the program comprising:

enabling a user at one of a plurality of terminals to communicate with a server apparatus to compose, view and respond to [a] an interpersonal message; and

displaying a receiver state list indicating respective states of a plurality of receivers whom

[a] the interpersonal message is multi-addressed to.

24. (TWICE AMENDED) A computer readable storage medium storing a program, the program comprising:

displaying [the] an interpersonal message receiver state list which includes [receivers'] names of receivers of the interpersonal message and completion information indicating whether the receivers of the interpersonal message have viewed the interpersonal message or whether the receivers of the message have completed business activities related to a content of the interpersonal message, on a terminal.

25. (TWICE AMENDED) A computer readable storage medium storing a program, the program comprising:

enabling a user at one of a plurality of terminals to compose, view and respond to [a] an interpersonal message; and

preparing a receiver state list indicating respective states of a plurality of receivers whom [a] the interpersonal message is multi-addressed to.

26. (TWICE AMENDED) The storage medium according to claim 25, wherein the receiver state list includes a plurality of receivers' names and completion information indicating whether receivers of the interpersonal message have viewed the interpersonal message or whether the receivers of the interpersonal message have completed business activities related to a content of the interpersonal message.

27. (TWICE AMENDED) The storage medium according to claim 26, wherein the program comprises:

recovering open information for all the receivers of the interpersonal message indicating an open state to a not-opened state when content of the transmitted interpersonal message is amended by a sender, wherein

the receiver state list includes open information indicating whether the receivers have opened the interpersonal message.